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The New England Church Assoc



PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

Conference on the Pro
Rural Church in
England

HELD IN BOS

JANUARY 18 and 19



The Fort Hill Pr

SAMUEL USHER

176 TO 184 HIGH ST

BOSTON, MASS.

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England Country Association



MEETINGS

OF THE

the Problems of the
Church in New
England

IN BOSTON

18 and 19, 1909

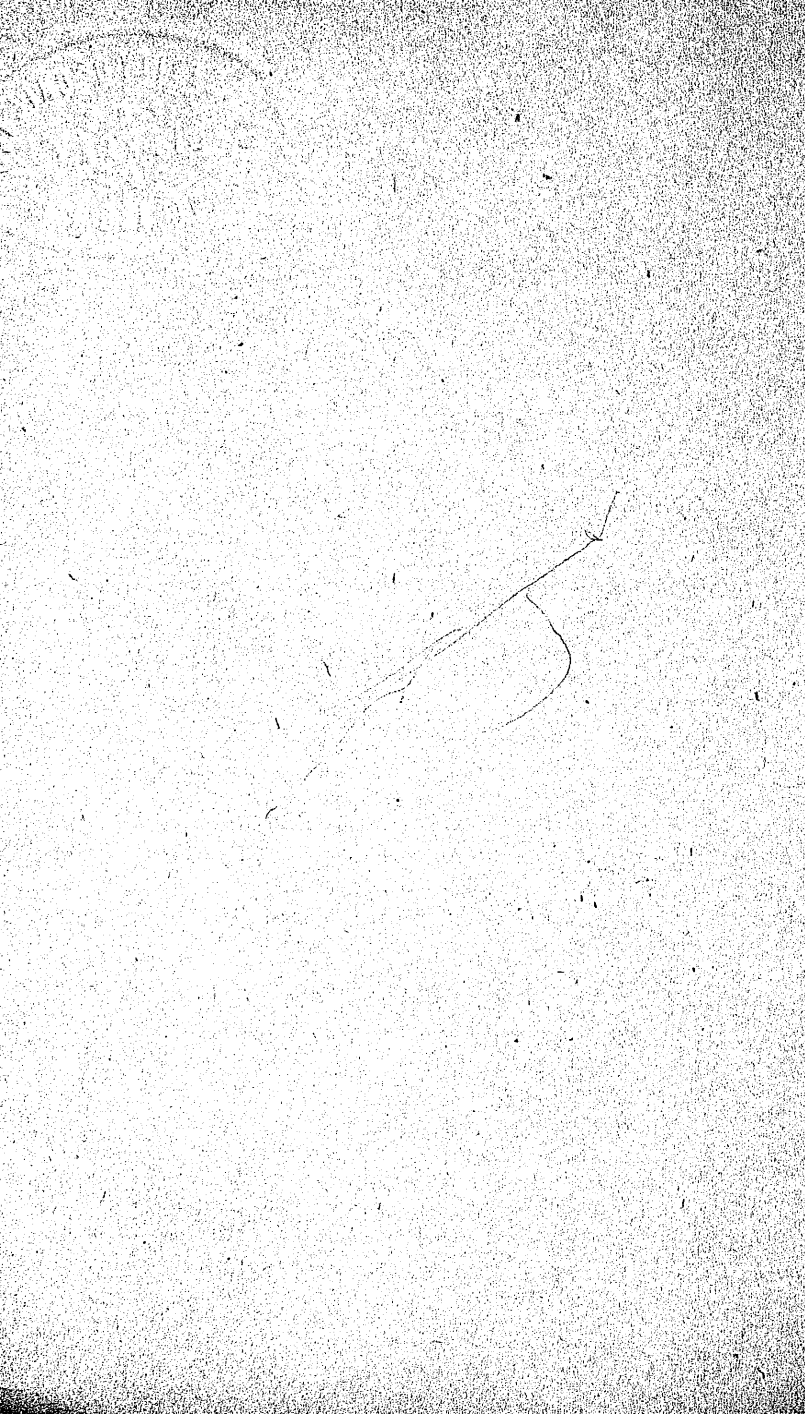


Port Hill Press

LUEL USHER

184 HIGH STREET

BOSTON, MASS.



Conference on the Problems of the Rural Church in New England.

REPORT.

MONDAY AFTERNOON, JANUARY 18, 1909.

PRESIDENT BUTTERFIELD of Massachusetts Agricultural College, who spoke on a "New England Campaign for Rural Progress," was introduced as one of the men who had done notable work for the improvement of rural conditions. He summed up his speech by saying that the fundamental problem was the rebuilding and developing on the farms of a class of people who would meet the requirements and fulfill the ideals of American civilization. The three great forces for the solution of this problem are *education, organization, and the religious life*. The three great concrete movements now to be set on foot are, *first*, the taking stock of rural conditions; *second*, a campaign of education with respect to all phases of country life; *third*, a series of meetings to confer on rural conditions and bring about a solution of each of these problems.

Discussion was opened by Rev. E. R. Smith, of Concord, N. H. He spoke mainly of conditions in New Hampshire, where the people are by no means degenerate nor the pastors unfitted for their task. Specific examples were mentioned of men who had achieved notable results under difficult circumstances. The work of this conference will act as a stimulus to greater effort and interest. The missionary societies and agricultural colleges do much good, but they must unite with the people and get their coöperation before they can accomplish their greatest work.

Colonel Daniels, of Fairfax County, Virginia, concluded a brief speech by saying that only from the farms could come the best material for supplying the city churches.

Rev. T. E. Ham, of Dexter, Me., a farmer-preacher, then spoke of the conditions in Maine. The farmer's life there is much less arduous than it used to be. Modern improvements have done much to bring him in touch with the cities and give him a broader outlook — the telephone, the daily paper, the rural free delivery, and farmers' insti-

tutes. But there is a great need for conferences which will go further than the farmers' institutes toward bringing him face to face with wider problems of rural social life. The people are anxious for religious training, but will not submit to the inadequate preaching of men who cannot preach.

Mr. George C. Wright followed, saying that President Butterfield's suggestion was practically the same as that made by Edwin D. Mead and Dwight L. Moody many years ago, that the church must become the center of all the social, industrial, and religious activities of the community.

Mr. Drew, representing the Young Men's Christian Association, gave an account of the work of that association in rural communities. He said that it brought the boys together in athletic clubs, organized debates for the men, and got up entertainments which brought the people together. The idea is to have each organization independent, governed by its own officers, and the work done by local talent. Many times willful, ungovernable boys become members of the church and make valuable citizens when given something to do in which they are interested.

Rev. O. C. Sargent, of Concord, N. H., described the work of one minister near him among foreigners and the great awakening among the people of all classes which came about through his efforts. The salvation of these communities is through the men and women who live in them, and who own their farms.

Rev. Isaac H. Lidstone, of Union, Me., made a plea for the boys between the ages of twelve and sixteen. Give them reasons why they ought to go to church; show them how to make men of themselves. They only want something difficult to do to prove the good there is in them.

Rev. J. N. Pardee, of Bolton, Mass., agreed that it is impossible to take a man and separate him into parts and say this part is economic, this industrial, this social, and this religious. Man is a unit, but the question is at the bottom an economic one. The first thing is to improve economic conditions, and they are improving. The value of personal property has been increasing; people are living more comfortably than twenty years ago. There is a feeling that the ministry is commercializing itself, but unless it has funds, it must inevitably be hampered in its work.

Prof. Robert J. Sprague agreed with Mr. Pardee that at bottom the problem of the country church is an economic question. The boys from

the farms are leaving Maine for Chicago and other great western cities. There are no ideals for them in country life after they have gained their education. Give them a feeling of the high calling of the country life.

MONDAY EVENING, JANUARY 18, 1909.

Mr. C. C. Thurber, of the Church Settlement House, Danbury, N. H., told of his work among the country villages. He mentioned the small salaries which the ministers receive in these places, where they must often eke out their meager living by doing those things which may take support from some one else. Their chief desire is to get away as soon as possible and so there is a constant succession of ministers, not one staying long enough in his parish to impress his personality on his congregation. The great need is for men, — good preachers sent from the city, — men with power to hold their audiences; and need also for money to pay these men and to bring the benefits of the outer world to these little back-country villages. They need attention as much as people in the cities, and from them comes the material for the making of the real American man and woman.

Rev. Ernest Hamlin Abbott, of *The Outlook*, spoke on the church as a social force. The country church at present is often a "Creedal Club." A man must not go to such a church if he does not belong to the "club." In the country church more than in the city church sectarianism is out of place. Yet there are four great possibilities for good — moral, spiritual, educational, and social. But none of these forces can attain its full power until the narrow "creedal" belief can be done away with.

President Eliot, of Harvard University, summed up his idea for the restoration of the country church in one word — endowment. Adequate financial support is absolutely necessary. There are three methods of obtaining this support: state aid, the tithing system, and endowment. State support in this country is an impossibility. The Mormon Church is adequately supported by tithes, but this seems impossible for Protestant churches. The alternative is endowment. Educational institutions are supported by state funds and by endowments. State funds not being available for the support of country churches, and many rural parishes being too poor to support the minister as he must be supported if he is to do his proper work, it follows that they must be endowed. But the endowment should be in the hands of an interdenominational board, centrally located, which can look over the entire field and expend the income where it will do

the most good. An endowment equal to that of Harvard University would pay half the salaries of a thousand country pastors, salaries which would enable these pastors to live in comfort and carry on their work vigorously.

TUESDAY MORNING, JANUARY 19, 1909.

The first speaker was Rev. Isaac H. Lidstone, of Union, Me., who took the place of Rev. Wilbert L. Anderson, of Amherst. Mr. Lidstone opened his remarks by saying that the problem of the country church was a sectarian problem. Another problem is that some people contribute to the church according to their means, but others according to their meanness. Interest people in the boys and girls and break up vicious gatherings by providing games and other pastimes for their diversion. We need the best men to reach the worst men. No one is more welcome or has more influence in the country homes than the minister, provided he is a real man. He must know things, those which are taught and those which must be learned among the people. He must go out and know the farmer in his home, and be interested in those things which interest the farmer. He must not be looking for a soft job or always thirsting for a vacation. He must be manly, patriotic, wholesome. He must go into his work as a business man goes into his business.

Rev. George Hodges, dean of the Episcopal Theological School, followed with a paper on "Training Men for the Country Church." The country church needs men with a sense of humor, a sense of humanity, the spirit of religion, who are able to do practical things. The first step in training men for the country church is to know what the country church needs. And the first need is that the man shall be contented with country life. He must believe that the country is the best place on the earth. He must be contented with his job. In the second place, he must be a man who is interested in individuals, for, unlike the city parson, he must deal wholly with the individual man and woman, and not with classes. He must never be bored or find people uninteresting, for there are no such people. A third need is for men who are equipped for the country by a sense of the importance of the work. Jesus Christ was a country minister. Other men have done great work in this field — George Herbert, Charles Kingsley, Jonathan Edwards, for example. The kind of church the city minister will have depends upon the men the country parson sends to the city to fill that church. The fourth need is for men who are prepared to

do the general work of the ministry, not men who have specialized, They must be able to organize recreations, to lecture on any subject, understand the social needs of the people, and see to it that those needs are satisfied. One of the initial things in his work is to bring together the country churches. He should coöperate with other members of his profession and so do away with some of the bitter competition between country ministers. Let him start coöperative cooking clubs, libraries, debates, etc. He is not working for himself, but for the town. He must dignify his office by being dignified himself.

There ought to be a professorship of practical philanthropy in all theological schools to teach the ideals of a country town, where to look for weaknesses and dangers in the country town, to teach the kinds of organizations that will be most useful in his work. The unit of the parish in the country is the family, the domestic household. There are two things which a man must have if he is going to work in a country church. The first is *knowledge*. We must know the place and the God of the place. The second is *courage*. He must feel that he has a kind of work that calls for the highest kind of heroism — the heroism of duty.

Rev. J. N. Pardee opened the discussion. First, there is the sectarianism in the country church which is far different from that of twenty years ago. It is now little more than a social inheritance, but much more difficult to deal with than if there were reasonable arguments to combat. The only cure is the dying out of some of the weaker churches through the organizations of the young people which are interdenominational. In most towns it is impracticable to have a social service church, but there can be a social service minister who can seek for the line of least resistance to inherited prejudice. Above all, the minister must not forget the one vital point where he holds the key — the pulpit. When a man fails in the pulpit he can be said to fail everywhere. There is no keener audience anywhere than in the country church, and no audience which can sooner detect sophistry. Mr. Pardee disagreed with some of the preceding speakers by saying that while a minister ought to know how to do all things, he must on no account do anything which is not directly a part of his pastoral work, provided he can train others to take his place in such external things. The best work he can do for a town is to make it able to do for itself.

Mr. Ham then gave a brief account of the equipment of the country minister. He was a strong advocate of the idea of the "farmer

minister," not as a permanent solution of the problem, but as a factor in reviving an interest in church work in communities where such interest has died out, and where a regular minister could not be supported.

President Butterfield spoke on the need of men in the community who could see the whole problem of country life. They are needed, not only in the ministry, but also as school teachers, country doctors, Young Men's Christian Association workers, and farmers. It is essential that they all see the problem as a whole and not feel that each individual problem that comes to them is the only problem. Each must see the relation of his special work to the whole problem of building up a wholesome country life.

Professor Sprague then spoke of the danger of epidemics in the cities of tuberculosis or other infectious diseases, because some country minister had failed to impress upon the farming people a sense of their social responsibility. He ought even to give instruction to people who are not conversant with modern teachings as to the danger of their not caring for themselves and their live stock in a hygienic manner. The sources of city health and city wealth lie in the country and the minister must make it his work to see that the people understand and appreciate their importance. He urged the practicability of a man's taking a course in "country ethics" at some agricultural college.

Professor Merriam, of Hartford Theological Seminary, then told of the great importance of such conferences in bringing to the attention the place which the country holds in the national welfare, and gave the statistics of the ratio of the country population to that of the city.

TUESDAY AFTERNOON, JANUARY 19, 1909.

Mr. Pardee opened the meeting by calling upon Professor Carver.

Mr. Carver answered by agreeing that one of the great needs was for leaders, but one thing which had not as yet been sufficiently emphasized was the question, To what shall the leader lead his people? There was need that the country people be led to live their own lives and not try to copy the habits and fashions of their friends in the city. He compared the rural population of the United States with that of France, showing the frugality and independence of the latter. Only by setting its own standards and living up to them can the rural community ever really attain a dignified position.

Prof. Owen H. Gates, of Andover, Mass., read the report of the com-

mittee on Country Church Work. (See page 10.) A motion was made and carried that the report be adopted and that an Executive Committee be appointed to carry into effect its suggestions.

Professor Peabody, of Harvard University, opened the discussion. The problem of the ministry in the city is different from that of the country and calls for very different ways of treating it. Men in the city are specializing more and more in their individual subjects. But the minister in the country must be, like the country doctor, versed in all things. For many years the country community, in some parts of New England, has been steadily going down hill, in some degree through the influence of sectarianism. Character has degenerated, self-respect has declined. One of the most portentous problems of the day is the drain upon the country town due to the drift to the cities. This movement proceeds from the centers of low cost of living and low wages to the centers of high cost of living and high wages. But there is a deeper aspect than this economic view, and that is that this movement is intellectual and psychological. It is the desire to meet the risks of life rather than to be contented with its resources. A young man makes the great adventure to satisfy the demands of the spirit. And thus the problem becomes plain. It is the problem of making the country, just as it is, not imitative of the city, but in itself and of itself interesting. The work of Sir Horace Plunkett in Ireland is an excellent example. If the country minister is a mere instrument, he is not likely to do much, nor is it of importance what he does. But, if he studies and understands his material, applies himself to the intensive farming of the religious life, if he loves the country and lives for it, he is not only likely to be happy, but is likely to contribute in an unforeseen way to the great ideal of religious unity. Unity is not a thing to be got by seeking after. It is a thing that happens by the way. While people are working and doing things together, they discover that they are praying and believing together.

Mr. A. W. Anthony, of Lewiston, Me., then spoke from the standpoint of the city minister. He said that the city visitor was often the occasion of the establishment of an unnecessary church in a community. In some instances the city visitor even makes the people dissatisfied with the country pastor, who may perhaps lack the culture of the city pastor, although in other respects he is most excellent. Again, the city visitor goes to the country for rest, and usually takes this on Sunday, which is a bad example. But more serious still, he is consuming energy and strength as a boarder in the country home. In the

summer, in some communities, the country pastor's audience is made up almost exclusively of the city people, for the natives are too busy getting dinner for the city boarders to attend church. And this takes away an opportunity for the church to reach the community. The country church cannot be materially helped by endowment of any description. There is great danger of such cases impoverishing the church, as it is apt to depend upon its funds and do nothing for itself. There must be a type of preacher who has laid hold of faith, who can get a living out of the soil so that he will be largely his own support. But he must not lose his intellectual life in seeking his physical life. If it were possible, there should be a man who would represent no one denomination, being ordained by several. He would have no heresy and could preach the essential message of the Gospel.

Mr. Ham gave instances of farmer preachers who had earned a sufficient living on their farms while following their calling.

Mr. Lidstone questioned the advisability of farmer preachers. He said that while the minister ought to know how to get a living out of his farm, the average man could not do it and still keep up his regular work of the ministry.

Mr. Stewart, of Rhode Island, said that in Rhode Island many churches had been wrecked by the farmer preachers who served without salaries. Now there are none to take their places and the churches cannot realize that they must pay the salaries. One of the worst things that can happen to a church is to endow it, provided the church has the handling of the money. Churches cannot always be killed off nor combined, so sometimes the problem must be solved of maintaining two churches in one community. It is a tremendous mistake to say "this man will do for the country." The man in the country must have brain enough and training enough to lay hold of the social and industrial as well as the religious needs of the community. He must have the tools to work with, and he must have sufficient support to make him contented with his lot.

Mr. Root, Secretary of the Federation of Churches, gave an account of its work. It lays emphasis on coöperation. The essential thing is that in every township there shall be some form of organization through which the churches can do their distinctive work. Certain lines of social service are so vital that if the church does not do them some other organization will. Unless the church knows its own community and its needs, some other organization will meet the need. There are many communities in New England where other organiza-

tions are doing the work which the church ought to do and can do. The Federation stands for the proposition that the churches shall stand as one, doing the things that need to be done. In order to accomplish that ideal, the first thing is to know the facts. The work of the Federation is simply that of a joint committee which learns the facts. It must know every individual in the community and know if that person is reached by any church or can be reached in any manner. The committee prevents overlapping and *overlooking*, and learns what kinds of coöperative work are most effective in different communities. Churches are uniting, not by arbitration nor by forcing, but by coöperation and removing this difficulty. The Federation makes no attempt to restore the relation between church and state.

The following gentlemen were appointed as members of the Executive Committee:

President Horr, of Newton Theological Institution; President Butterfield, of Massachusetts Agricultural College; Rev. J. N. Pardee, Bolton, Mass.; Rev. John Pierpont, Williamsburg, Mass.; Prof. A. R. Merriam, Hartford Theological Seminary; Prof. Owen H. Gates, Andover Theological Seminary; Prof. T. N. Carver, Harvard University.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF COUNTRY CHURCH ASSOCIATION, JANUARY 19, 1909.

THE question which a few of us, named by Professor Carver for the purpose, have been thinking about is narrower than the purpose of the Association as stated upon the program. We have considered "how to promote the interests of the country church as a social force," and have not given special attention to the methods by which those churches shall do their work. Our thought has been, not what the community needs of the church, but what the churches of the rural districts need from us to fit them for work which we assume to be needed. We assume that these churches will do their work as well as they can, and our part as outside of those communities is to see that the conditions are fair, that our champion is fit and well supported. This accounts for the omission of mention of the many agencies that the churches may well use in their work.

GENERAL METHOD OF WORK TO BE ADOPTED BY THIS ASSOCIATION.

The theory of the church needs no revision; we workers need to understand the theory of it better. The value of the church as a social factor, in theory, needs no further emphasis. Our presence here indicates a healthy state of mind upon this subject. And we are not alone. At the very outset we may encourage ourselves by the conviction that on all sides men and women are at work bravely and wisely upon these very problems. We who are gathered here are already engaged in lines of work which bear directly upon the purpose of the Association.

These facts suggest the natural way for us to work. In the judgment of the committee it is best that this Association should not absorb interest and effort, but seek to diffuse it among the many agencies already in the field so far as they can easily and naturally cover it. There is abundant scope for us as an association in observing what bearings the special religious activity in which we are already engaged has, and may have, upon the object of our organization; to suggest to others and to ourselves a point here and there where a little greater emphasis or a slight readjustment of forces may secure far

greater results for the betterment of the rural community. And there is always a call for greater zeal and courage in religious work, and this will certainly be a large part of the service which we may render to each other and to our fellow workers through New England. This, then, is our suggestion as to the general method of our work as an association. At the same time there is nothing in this policy to prevent our assuming responsibility for needed service for which no one else is responsible.

SMALL BEGINNINGS.

We suggest that it is best to begin by accomplishing at once the small things that come to hand. The large propositions will come in their own time, after the manner of the boiling kettle. It is not well to try to force our individual work into some large scheme.

Of course this is the recommendation of the committee, for it is exactly on this platform of small beginnings that we were appointed. We were expected to make a beginning of suggestions right away, and that they would be small went without saying, and will become evident as the sayings proceed. But we can bear testimony that this is a capital way to make connection with the larger propositions. There is no lack of large projects when we are ready for them, and the best preparation for them is a clear sense of the unity and the universality of our Christian ideal; of the importance and the nobility of our particular humble part of the work of the church; and an utter willingness to adapt our methods to the needs of the day and place. This is the beginning which has in it more than a prophecy of the end.

It is in this spirit that we make our few suggestions. They do not cover the whole ground, or any part of it well; in making them we have held ourselves to what seem entirely simple and easy of accomplishment, an example of the method which we advocate.

DESIRABLE LITERARY WORK.

Special attention ought to be given to the development and the circulation of an adequate literature of the social and religious conditions of the country. We need a thorough and scholarly study of them from outside. And we need still more a thorough statement of them by men who have become experts by reason of work within them, as President Eliot has written upon university administration. Mr. Anderson's book only whets our appetite for more. We need a description of the typical country town, written with full knowledge of all the forces of heredity and environment which make and mar it; such

books as one professor would write and others be glad to refer their students to for serious profit.

It would be a rewarding task and at the same time a valuable service if students or teachers in some seminary should prepare a bibliography of the subject and place it at the disposal of all interested.

We need information, still expert, but of another and more generally interesting kind, which ought not to be hard to secure. Our country towns are full of ministers whose experience ought to be made available for the ministers of the younger generation. Mere rambling reminiscences of a long life would not quite fill the bill, but the minister who has a good memory for the events of a fifty years' experience, and has at the same time an interest in and appreciation of present-day conditions, ought not to fall on sleep without serving another generation as well as his own.

There ought to be more strong novels descriptive of our New England rural life written without those little suggestions of the superiority of city life, written without the "they always have dinner at noon" sort of apologetic explanation.

We ought to have more searching of the woods and mountains and streams for local legends and fairy stories. And if some seer of visions and teller of tales will bring out of those wilds well-written stories of wonderful sights and thrilling experiences and curious mysteries, we will not ask whether he found them or invented them. Wife and I will love our New England the better, and be thankful, and bid our children be thankful, if our work requires or permits us to live there a part or all of the time.

All this general appreciation of the country and the humanness of the people of the country is coming on apace, and when it is still more in evidence there will be less need to urge young people to devote themselves to work for and in the country.

SUMMER VISITORS.

For a month or two in the summer most of our New England villages have large numbers of visitors, coming in on them like a tide, with untold energy but a little hard to harness down to any kind of systematic work. They do not come to work, but to rest after the labors of the season in church and school and club. The papers report the amusing features of the situation, — the cartoonist must live, — and there are harsh things said over the hot stove, and over the broken harness after the automobile has passed, but let these things not blind us to the real

facts in the case. The summer population is a very helpful and hopeful feature of rural life. In church work, in social life, and in village improvement their influence, quiet and scattered as it may be, is yet large and strong, and, after all deductions are made, it is generally for the welfare of the community. This is to be expected; it is none the less to be commended. We also wish that it were still more true. Special expression of gratitude for many favors received may well be left to those benefited. And special appeals may remain an individual matter. Perhaps the best resolution that we can pass will be one directed to ourselves, a new year's resolution for next summer.

We have to lay aside the false notion that we are, or that we bring, to our country cousins their first astonished glimpse of the city; that country life and manners are what they are because, poor things, they do not know any better. It is no farther from the country to the city than from the city to the country; farmers now and then, especially after the summer season is over, have a little ready money; there are still children in farmers' families, and some of them are away, at school as pupils or teachers, or in business.

This multiplication of friendships in the summer vacation is not all a missionary work. There is as much recreation and profit in exchanging city friends for country friends for a few weeks as there is in exchanging the lanes between tall office buildings for the brooks and valleys that wind deep and noisy between the wooded slopes of New England hills.

It would be of great value to all if the resident and the visiting ministers could meet a few times for informal conference upon church questions. These conferences should be conducted in a way not to impose special burdens upon any one; at the same time the subjects should be the serious ones of common interest.

AGRICULTURAL AGENCIES.

It is with utmost satisfaction that we note a real sign of the times in the emphasis that is placed by the various agencies for the economic improvement of rural districts upon the value of character and social integrity. State boards of agriculture may well be urged to place still further emphasis upon moral conditions, for their influence upon crops and cattle is as direct and potent as is that of foods and fertilizers. Agricultural colleges and farmers' institutes should give abundant place to topics of general ethical value.

It is scarcely necessary formally to commend the summer school for

ministers, held last summer at the Massachusetts Agricultural College at Amherst. While that college and other colleges in New England must be their own judges of the propriety of repeating the experiment, we hope that it may be done. At all events we hope and feel sure that by this means and others, but always by the presence upon the boards of management and of instruction of men keen to seize the chance that presents itself, they will labor steadily to increase the moral worth and power of men and women in the rural community.

We hope that the Country Life Commission will give a large place to the Christian church in its roster of forces which are making for improvement in rural conditions; that they will appreciate the fact that the minister is often in reality, and oftener in theory, the best initiator of helpful enterprises of various kinds; and that the church can many times lend itself most effectively to the spread of information about the commission's work, and interest in its prosecution. These are facts which will discover themselves more and more fully in the course of the work, and they ought to be constantly in mind from the start. In all the changes that have taken place of late years in the relation of the government and its various agencies to the social life of the people, have we not about reached the point where the bugaboo of ecclesiastical domination, and that other one of denominational jealousy, shall cease to terrorize government or people?

COLLEGE BOYS AND GIRLS.

The committee recommend that we try in every reasonable way to make the many country boys and girls in academies and colleges realize the fact that they are to be the leaders in their home communities in every respect, economically, socially, and religiously, as well as intellectually. College presidents do well to urge this upon their students in public address; teachers should give it a place in their instruction, and give personal counsel how this natural leadership can be gracefully and forcibly realized. The attitude, "You can tell me nothing new about my own village!" should yield, under the ethical instruction of college, to the serious inquiry, "What can I do to make my own village a better place to live in?"

FOREIGNERS.

The committee feel that the presence of large numbers of foreigners in New England is liable to give a false idea of the work of the rural church. It constitutes a problem, it is true, and is accompanied by

dangers, but the problem and the danger is in the comparative ignorance and indifference of the church forces to the facts. When once this attitude is remedied there is no problem of special difficulty and no danger save what always constitutes the other side of a great opportunity. The foreign problem involves many changes in our church work, but there are worse things in work than the necessity of change.

One thing is certain; we must rid ourselves forever of the notion that the foreigner is essentially inferior to that other foreigner who likes to be called native born. The task which the church has before it of reaching and saving the foreigner in New England is far more promising and alluring than that of reaching and recovering the occasional degenerate descendant of our old New England stock. This is not the place to discuss immigration. We mention it only to say that if there is any strength and wisdom and alertness and optimism in our organized Christianity and in our Christian young men, the opportunity afforded by the foreign invasion of New England will call it out. Gumption is the word I want and the thing we need. Only let us have the courage to use the word and to show the quality at the same time.

The foreigner in the rural district is not the serious problem, though he may be in the city. The foreigner on the farm, where he cultivates independence with the soil, where his old-country grievances are forgotten, instead of being drowned out by new and worse ones, where he mingles with Americans, where his creation of wealth out of the soil is an obvious fact, gradually becoming a significant fact to him, — can any one who believes in work and service at all ask for a finer field?

UNITED EFFORT.

We come now to some questions as to the organization of the local church for social and economic service in the community.

There is only one correct way of approaching this subject, and that is through a study of the needs of the community. This is, of course, quite beyond our limits here. But one essential feature it is pertinent to note. The local community is our unit of study because it is a true unity. In all the organization of the village life and work, so far as it has developed naturally out of the needs of the village itself, this unity is manifest. Growth will involve division of labor, but still without enduring rivalry or real duplication of effort.

It seems to be self evident that in a small village the church force which is to do its legitimate work without waste must be a single force.

In its work it must be a unit like its field of work. In its reputation it must have all the essentials of unity. The only reason for a division of the church force which is economically justified is that it may keep pace with the growing demands upon it. And here the first step will be the division of labor whereby its various subordinate enterprises will each have its own group of workers; but throughout the whole organization there must be, for economical service, the same unity which pervades the various operations of every complex manufacturing establishment.

This method of approaching the question of the organization of the local church for social service seems also to be identical with the will of the Master for his followers. Stern practical necessity and lofty ideal have the same message. Let the field and its needs determine the force and its organization. This is our suggestion upon this vital subject and we believe that it should be held fundamental in all that we may undertake or advise in our common capacity.

And this is as far as the committee wish to express themselves upon the subject of church union, or even of church federation. The church forces of the country are organized in denominations and there are great possibilities of good in this grouping. We all of us have our denominational allegiance, and most of us our denominational work. But in our work as associated together here, while we shall freely avail ourselves of all the help we can secure from denominational machinery, we feel that unity of effort is all-important.

We do not need to wait for a union of the national organizations before realizing in some one little village in Vermont or New Hampshire about all the practical good that such a union can ever be expected to bring them in particular. We do not need to wait for federation of the churches to become the common practice; the movement need not even be mentioned by name in the hamlet.

The work is first. Let all the church members tackle the work together. That is all there is to it. When they stop to take breath after a season's campaign they may discover that in one little village at least they have had federation and union after the Master's own heart. The social influence of the local church possesses no denominational quality and cannot be efficiently organized on such lines. It may be important to a township that it be represented in the legislature by a Republican or a Democrat, but for postmaster or road surveyor other criteria must control.

The sections most needing the social influence of the church are

those districts remote from the meeting houses, where to think or speak of denominations is an absurdity. To do so is to import a notion that will inevitably work to the injury of any wise undertaking.

CHURCH MUSIC.

We desire to raise the question, and to raise it is to answer it, whether there is not a possibility of increasing the power of the church along social lines by securing a greater attention to its music. A generation has grown up that knows not the singing school of glorious and harmonious memory. True, our children are being taught music in the public schools; this ought to be done, but the singing school, or its legitimate successor, ought not to be left undone. It does not require a course in physics or psychology or sociology or theology to show that a score or a hundred people uniting in singing, earnestly, and with abandon, are learning and illustrating the true spirit of fellowship in effective and joyous effort. Our churches ought to know and use five times as many tunes as they do. Years ago the hymnals seemed in part at fault. Now that we have excellent hymnals, the situation is not improving fast enough. Our choir leaders are not doing what ought to be done to make the churches singing churches. And it is worse in the city than in the country, only we are not talking about the city. The choir leader ought to be at the same time instructor of music for the congregation, with some of the singing school methods. If worse came to worst he might occasionally be given fifteen precious minutes right out of the short hour of Sunday morning service for drilling the people in singing. Ordinarily when the pastor announces a new hymn, each succeeding verse finds the choir singing more and more alone, and the net result is a dead failure. The audience would be glad to sing new tunes, but they must learn them, and in the learning they would find new interest in all parts of the service. The committee think it worth while to urge this matter upon the church wise men. A Christian singing master, a man with a voice for the tune and a heart for the hymn and a good conductor, brought into a village by the united church force, would be a godsend.

It goes without saying that this work should be on the community basis. And why should not the choirs of the various churches combine for a variety of social services? Perhaps the gospel of this kind of effort would prove the salvation of many a church choir, individually and collectively.

We recommend, then, that in every reasonable way the churches be

urged and assisted to utilize their music more fully as an aid to their common worship and to their work for the community as a whole.

INCREASE OF SALARIES.

We think it worthy of note here that in various denominations there is a movement, — its details need not be dwelt upon, — for the increase of the minimum salary to be paid their ministers. While this is not the place to endorse the movement formally, — we all have abundant opportunity to express ourselves in other fellowships, — it has one feature that promises much in connection with our special aim. It goes without saying that the total amount paid by these denominations to their ministers will not be summarily increased by the addition of say \$100 to every \$900 salary now on their list. It means that in one way and another a part of these small salaries will be brought up to the higher minimum, but that others will drop out, it being impossible to increase them with any wise effort. This will certainly result in a greater fellowship in church work. And does it not look toward a redistribution of the work along the lines of natural economic law? One fully trained and fully paid minister will be found in charge of a large work, and associated with him will be lay workers with suitable pay, specialists in their several lines of work. In the employment of these lay workers denominational lines will not be followed as closely as may seem essential in the case of ordained men. All this means for the country minister a promise of conditions more favorable for fruitful and enjoyable service, and that again means a stronger and more dominant church influence in the community.

TRAINING OF MINISTERS FOR COUNTRY CHURCHES.

This brings us at length to the part of our subject which is most vital and interesting, viz., the better training of the minister for service in the country church. At this point our aim coincides exactly with that of the theological seminaries. Under other conditions this fact might develop embarrassment. As it is, the hearty interest of the seminaries has been assumed in the purpose and work of this association, and the event has proven the assumption correct. We can hardly determine whether the suggestions which are to follow are made by the seminaries in the hope of securing the sympathy of others in their work or are made to the seminaries from outside.

In the matter of improving the church through the minister, the agency most naturally to be looked to, and the agency most apt to

respond to an appeal is the seminary. In behalf of two of the committee, workers in seminaries, we ask you to renew your interest in the schools which have this matter as their chief work.

A. In the Seminary.

Can we do less than ask the seminaries to give special attention to the training of the country minister? Their students should know the country as well as they can possibly be taught by lectures and books. They should be taken into the country now and then for a study of its local conditions. Every Sunday of supplying a country pulpit should be followed by a report to the instructor and conference with him as to prevailing conditions and helpful modifications. There may be specially endowed general lectureships which can be devoted now and then to this purpose.

Should special courses be arranged upon the subject? Perhaps in the present crowded condition of the curriculum this is too much to expect, but there is surely abundant opportunity for such a covering of the ground that the graduate who goes to the country church will go trained as specifically for that field as his classmate is trained for a city church. The training must be a broad one and he must be inspired with a spirit of self-confidence and with a courage suited to his isolated location.

This suggestion of more emphasis upon the country work elicits, of course, the remark that the course is already overloaded with many such claimants for special emphasis. The answer that the committee would make to this objection is that it ought not to be expected to complete the training of a minister by three years spent in a seminary, or by any number of years preceding his actual experience. The minister has to master his work while at his work, and the help of the seminary after graduation is just as vital to his thorough training as the help rendered him in the period of his residence. Problems crowd upon him too diverse to be systematized in lectures, too personal to be treated in the classroom, too new to get into a course of lectures. He handles these problems after a fashion, and the wonder is that he handles them so well, but it is at great cost and with unnecessary labor. The seminary instructors ought to be at hand, expecting and anxious to be called upon, fitted as they are to give helpful counsel, by close sympathy with every movement and tendency in church or community.

B. Book Circulation and Correspondence.

Direct work of the seminaries for the pastors is by no means a new thing. Various experiments have been tried, with ample demonstration that it is welcome and successful and that it is destined to have a growing place in the organized work of the seminaries in the future. The phase of the work which can be carried on most easily, whether we think of the money and work involved, or of the necessity of readjustments of present methods, is the loaning of books to the ministers.

The committee wish the chairman to describe the work actually being done at one seminary along this line.

The librarian of Andover Seminary found himself four years ago intrusted with a sum of money to be used for books for country ministers in New England. The plan adopted was to offer the ministers (that the offer was confined to one denomination was only an incident of the limitation of the fund in amount) the reading of six volumes at a time, to be kept six months if desired, expense of carriage one way to be paid by the borrower. Books are bought for the purpose, both because we need more than one copy of many books and also because—perhaps I ought not to tell it—the average busy minister, though a seminary graduate, does not seem to feel the need of just the kind of book which is most sought for to adorn the shelves of a theological library.

As to results, we have served 210 ministers, about half in Massachusetts, a few in Maine and Connecticut, and a good number in Vermont and New Hampshire.

Of these about one hundred and forty are currently receiving our books, either planning to keep some on hand all the time, or calling for them for their winter's reading, or for special work in association or conference or public lectures or grange or evangelism or Bible classes. The work has been successful beyond my best hopes. So far as I know, it has not encountered a single word of adverse criticism. It has commended itself to the seminary authorities and I think I am not speaking without warrant when I say that there is no disposition to abandon it.

The gratitude of the men has been cordial and discriminating, arising as often from the advice which I give in connection with the books as from the books themselves. For it has been my purpose to add to the loan of the books a word of sympathy and interest in the work they propose, now and then a warning or mention of a better book or course

of reading; in a word, just such counsel as I would give if the man were in the seminary as my own pupil. This is the phase of the work which in my mind promises most for the future. A mere circulating library, however helpful it may be, lacks this element of counsel as of teacher to pupil. Circulation of books, if it is to appeal at all to the seminary worker, should be but one feature of a broad plan for a continuous training of the men who are out in the ministry. The expense involved, and it is not small, is the price paid by both parties for the keeping open of the line of communication between the man on the field and his base of supplies, and it is a ridiculously small price to pay, is it not? The man in his isolation and his resourcelessness and the man in the institution founded and maintained for the purpose of training ministers are kept in contact.

From my experience I am convinced that men not only need the books to read and help in the choice of books, but also encouragement to read them. Dr. Emrich in this state and Mr. E. R. Smith in New Hampshire have thought it worth while to urge their men to make use of the books. The need of this encouragement only emphasizes the urgency of some such system of supply. In the seminary, a student is working constantly under the influence of surroundings which compel him to study. Out on the Canada line a man needs and deserves the friendly and urgent counsel of the institution that he has been taught to call *alma mater*.

This is the story of the experiment, and now the committee suggest and urge that the seminaries be asked to give large place in plans for the future to this kind of service for the country minister, giving the men generous offers of reading matter and still more generous offers of advice about the books and about all the work of the parish and study. Let it be expected and provided for that, as each class is graduated, the personal relations between men and teachers will be maintained to their mutual advantage.

The expenses of maintaining the work of circulating books on such a plan could be greatly lessened if denominational limitations were disregarded. Indeed, our interest in the plan centers in the fact that it is a contribution to the welfare of the whole country community through the minister. The committee hope that the seminaries will carefully consider the possibility of conducting the work on a common basis, one common store of books being used in connection with the correspondence work, which will naturally enough remain in the care of the separate seminaries. We suggest that some working plan may be ar-

ranged by which the work of the General Theological Library may be promoted at the same time that its resources are made available in connection with this correspondence work.

C. Summer Schools and Institutes.

Another commendable method by which the seminaries are trying to put their resources to fuller use is by special brief schools to which they invite pastors. These have large promise and great success. They are subject to one unavoidable limitation in that they are conducted at a distance from the communities which we would like to see benefited.

In other departments of instruction institutes held in remote localities have proven of great value. This method of inspiration and instruction the church adopts in its various conventions and conferences. Why should not the seminary make use of this method? It has doubtless been thought of, and very likely dropped as impossible. With the desire uppermost in our minds to see the ministry of a whole section strengthened to the advantage of the social work of the church, the committee suggest the possibility of an institute to be held at some convenient place in the country, lasting four or five days, conducted by the several seminaries of Greater Boston, or of New England, working together, each sending its best man to deliver three or four lectures; all the ministers within easy reach to be invited, the subjects being chosen with reference to the welfare of the community, one or more other lecturers being asked to deliver single lectures upon allied topics.

Such an institute would not in any way interfere with plans for summer schools, and the hope would be to arouse the ministry and the church over the whole area to appreciate the unanimity and intensity of the desire that we have, as seminaries and as an association, to utilize our resources fully and exhaustively in the interest of the common work.

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion let us say as Christian men to Christian men that, like all our thinking and hoping and working, this matter of aiding the country church to a greater efficiency brings us back inevitably to spiritual values. The real question is not whether we approve of proposition 1, 2, 3, 9, or 10; it is not whether we shall write books or lead singing schools or mail books or letters. It is first, last, and always

a matter of service to our Master. We have the wish and purpose to serve him; to welcome the enlightenment of his spirit which is holy. In devising plans as may seem wise, we give ourselves also with our work. And whatever else we may accomplish, a handful or a multitude, we assure our brethren scattered throughout New England that they have our hearty and abiding sympathy and all possible coöperation.

